

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 00801 090218Z
ACTION ARA-14

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R 081903Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9410
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 0801

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BF
SUBJ: BAHAMIAN ELECTION DATE SET FOR JULY 19

1. THE BAHAMIAN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY WAS DISSOLVED JUNE 7 AT THE REQUEST OF ACTING PRIME MINISTER HANNA IN ABSENCE OF P.M. PINDLING WHO IS IN LONDON ATTENDING THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE. (PINDLING HAS TOLD REPORTERS IN LONDON THAT HE WILL CUT SHORT HIS STAY AND RETURN TO NASSAU THIS COMING WEEKEND.) NEW ELECTIONS FOR THE THIRTY-EIGHT MEMBER HOUSE WILL BE HELD JULY 19 AND THE NEW MEMBERS WILL HOLD THEIR FIRST SITTING ON OCTOBER 20, A DATE WHICH COINCIDES WITH THE OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE BAHAMAS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II.

2. IT IS EXPECTED THAT WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED CANDIDATES REPRESENTING THE RULING P.L.P., THE TWO MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES THE F.N.M. AND THE B.D.P., THE JINISCULE LEFTIST VANGUARD SOLCIALIST PARTY, AND SEVERAL EX-PLP MEMBERS RUNNING AS INDEPENDENTS WILL CONTEST THE ELECTION FOR THE THIRTY-EIGHT SEATS AND WILL MAKE THE REQUIRED \$429 DEPOSIT
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ON JUNE 16, NOMINATIONS DAY. THE PLP HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED ITS SLATE OF 37 CANDIDATES - IT IS NOT CONTESTING ONE CONSTITUANCY WHERE A PRO-PLP INDEPENDENT IS CANDIDATE - THE FNM HAS THUS FAR NOMINATED THIRTY-TWO CANDIDATES AND THE BDP HAS NAMED TWENTY-NINE.

3. AS P.M. PINDLING HAS STATED, THE MAIN ISSUES OF THE

CAMPAIGN WILL BE JOBS OR RATHER THE LACK OF THEM AND CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. HIS PLP GOVERNMENT HAS DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS IN OFFICE FAILED TO DELIVER THE FORMER AND SHOWN ITSELF EXTREMELY VULNERABLE TO CHARGES OF THE LATTER. AS A RESULT A UNIFIED OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ENTER THE ELECTION WITH JUSTIFIABLE CONFIDENCE. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE OPPOSITION'S FRAGMENTATION OVER THE LAST YEAR INTO TWO CAMPS, AND THE INTERNECINE WARFARE THEY HAVE WAGED AGAINST EACH OTHER, THEY OFFER NO REAL CHALLENGE TO THE RULING PLP AND CERTAINLY NO THREAT. MOST OBSERVERS - INCLUDING BOTH PLP STALWARTS AND OPPOSITIONISTS AS WELL AS OURSELVES - SEE NO LIKELIHOOD OF AN UPSET AND INDEED FEEL THAT PLP WILL BE RETURNED ON JULY 19 WITH A COMFORTABLE IF SLIGHTLY REDUCED MAJORITY OF THE HOUSE SEATS AND THIS PROGNOSIS TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE PRESENCE OF THE BALLOT OF THE "INDEPENDENTS" WHOSE PERSONAL FOLLOWING IN SOME DISTRICTS IS FORMIDABLE.

4. ANOTHER PLP GOVERNMENT (ALBEIT WITH REDUCED MAJORITY WHICH WOULD OFFER SUFFICIENT CHECKS AND BALANCES - NONEXISTANT AT THE MOMENT - IN THIS PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM) IS CONSIDERED BY SOME OF ITS STRONGEST CRITICS AS THE BEST ALTERNATIVE FOR THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE. THE EMBASSY SHARES THIS VIEW AND ON BALANCE FEELS THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE MORE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR US-BAHAMIAN RELATIONS BOTH IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERM. THE PLP AT THE LEAST HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNING AND FEW BELIEVE THAT MOST OF THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES OF WHATEVER LABEL WOULD, WERE THEY TO GAIN POWER, BE EITHER MORE IMAGINATIVE, MORE CONSCIENTIOUS, OR MORE HONEST. WHATEVER THE EXACT RESULTS WE CAN ONLY JOIN IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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WISHES EXPRESSED IN A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL OF THIS MORNING'S GUARDIAN THAT THE CANDIDATES "KEEP IT CLEAN" AND THAT THERE BE NO REPETITION OF THE EVENTS OF THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTION WITH ITS "LEGACY OF HOMICIDE, FIRE BOMBING AND THE GUN."
TAYLOR

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NNN

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